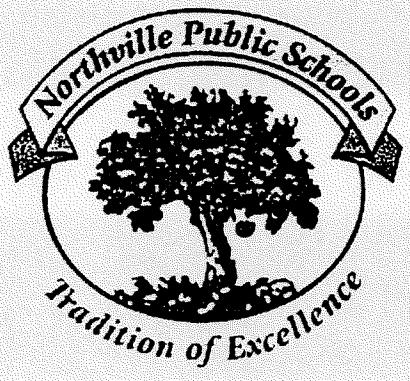
# The Use of Instructional Support Teams

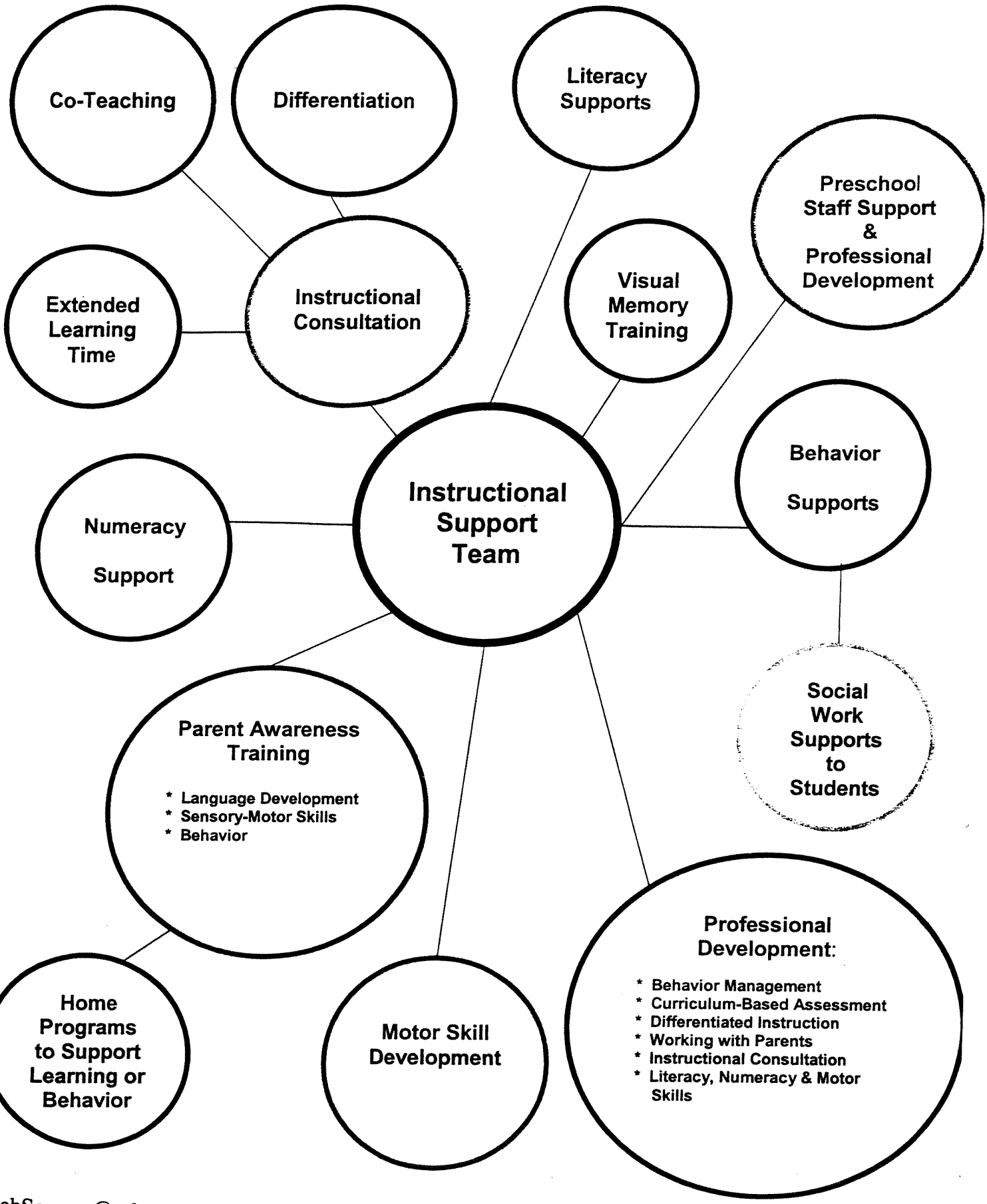
# as part of an

# Early Learning Success Initiative

# in the Northville Public Schools.



# A Model for Early Learning Success

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# *More Children At-Risk of Early Learning Failure*

1. Poor Language Development
2. Sensory-Motor Delays
3. Parenting/Basic Behavior Limits
4. Nutrition
5. Chronic Ear Infections or Allergies
6. Prenatal Exposure to Drugs/Alcohol
7. Inactive Lifestyles
8. Video Entertainment Time
9. Premature Births
10. Births to Young Mothers
11. Inadequate Medical Care
12. Single Parent Families

# *Identifiable Indicators of Early Learning Success*

*Language:*

- Vocabulary
- Phonemic Awareness
- Listening Skills
- Expressive Language

*Motor Skills:*

- Balance
- Agility
- Bilateral Motor Skills
- Body Awareness
- Laterality / Directionality
- Visual-Motor Skills

*Behavior:*

- Attention Skills
- Persistence
- Response to Adult Authority
- Ability to Delay Gratification

# *Cost Savings to Schools and Society*

1. Reduced need for Special Education.

2. Early school success is inversely related to every adolescent risky behavior:

   - Early Sexual Behavior
   - Substance Abuse
   - Drinking
   - School Drop-out
   - Violence
   - Criminal Behavior

# *Easier, Cheaper, Effective Interventions*

- High/Scope Foundation: Perry Preschool Long-Term Research
  Highscope.org

- Parents as Teachers National Center
  Patnc.org

- The Carolina Abecedarian Project: A 25 Year Study
  Fpg.unc.edu/~abc

- Success for All Foundation: Comprehensive Elementary Restructuring Program
  Successforall.com

- Instructional Support Teams: Effective Elementary Intervention
  Wm.edu/ttac/ist.html
  Ericae.net/ericdb/ED396471.htm

Sornson, Preventing Early Learning Failure, ASCD (2001).

# *Added Costs Per Child*

*When placed in a classroom-based special education program*

Estimated

$70,000 - $100,000

during the student's school career.

# Comparison of Michigan Total Special Education Identification Rates to Northville Public School Rates, 1990-01 to 2004-05

| Year | Michigan | Northville |
|---|---|---|
| 1990-91 | 10.5 | Data not available |
| 1991-92 | 10.5 | Data not available |
| 1992-93 * | 10.8 | 10.2 |
| 1993-94 | 11.1 | 9.9 |
| 1994-95 | 11.4 | 9.0 |
| 1995-96 | 11.6 | 8.8 |
| 1996-97 ** | 11.9 | 8.5 |
| 1997-98 | 12.2 | 8.5 |
| 1998-99 | 12.5 | 8.0 |
| 1999-00 *** | 12.8 | 7.0 |
| 2000-01 | 13.2 | 6.7 |
| 2001-02 | 13.4 | 6.6 |
| 2002-03 | 13.9 | 6.18 |
| 2003-04 | 14.2 | 5.65 |
| 2004-05 | Data not available. | 5.38 |

* Early Intervention training begins.
** IST Pilot at Silver Springs Elementary begins.
*** Full elementary implementation of IST process begins.

Northville data is based on unduplicated fall count, including all resident students. Special Education count includes resident students with any disability, including those receiving services in county-funded center programs.

Michigan data is based on unduplicated fall counts.
Source: Michigan Department of Education. May, 2003.

# Ideas to Consider

1. Literacy Supports
2. Numeracy Supports
3. Quality Preschool Experience
4. Behavior Supports and Training for Teachers
5. Commitment to Professional Development for Staff.
6. Motor Skill Development
   - Gross Motor
   - Visual Motor
   - Fine Motor
7. Visual Memory Training
8. Parent Support and Training
9. Soundfields
10. Instructional Support Teams

# Barriers to Prevention

*Ideas that prevent us from using Best Practice*

1. The Failure Model
2. Sort and Select Institutional Patterns
3. Reliance Upon Whole-Group Instruction in the Early Years
4. The Curriculum Crunch
5. Distribution of Resources
6. Professional Development
7. Home-School Separation
8. Funding Systems
9. The Steady State

# Questions for a School Committed to Early Learning Success

1. Do we consciously work to establish relationships with students and parents?

2. Do we use a consistent approach to behavior management?

3. Do students feel emotionally and physically safe in our school?

4. Do we establish procedures/routines for behavior, instruction, and transitions in our school?

5. Do we regularly assess what students know and can do (curriculum-based assessment) so that we can effectively design instruction?

6. Do we adjust instruction to meet the needs of all students (differentiation)?

7. Do we use a variety of learning materials and instructional techniques that allow students to spend much of their time at an appropriate instructional level?

8. Do we create daily opportunities for each student to do something exceptionally well?

# Questions for a School Committed to Early Learning Success

9. Do we have a well-established support structure to help teachers with challenging students?

10. Do we provide extra learning opportunities for students to develop essential skills? (Literacy, Numeracy, Sensory-Motor and Behavior Skills.)

11. Do we connect with parents to help them develop the behavior skills needed to create calm, happy homes, and the organizational skills to help their children become successful learners?

12. Do the educators in this school engage in continuous school improvement and continuous professional learning?

# Questions for a District Committed to Early Learning Success

1. Is it the District's clearly communicated policy to provide a successful early learning experience for every possible child?

2. Has the District developed strategies for communicating the importance of early learning success to the community?

3. Have we made a commitment to helping staff develop the skills needed to improve early learning success, including behavior management, curriculum-based assessment, differentiated instruction, working with parents, instructional consultation, literacy, numeracy and sensory-motor development?

4. Have we chosen a prevention model that fits the character of our District?

5. Have we made the decision to prioritize learning objectives so that teachers clearly understand what we expect to be essential content at each level?

# Questions for a District Committed to Early Learning Success

6. Do we have a plan for on-going assessment of student progress in basic skills?

7. Have we made a District commitment to include parents in the process of achieving early learning success, including providing quality training in the development of language skills, motor skills, and behavior skills?

8. Does our school improvement process help us learn how to improve early learning outcomes each and every year?

# ***Preventing Learning Problems***

***Robert Sornson, Ph.D.***

There are many reasons to prevent early learning failure whenever possible. Early learning success is related to the absence of adolescent and teenage risky behaviors including violence, dropping out of school, early sexual behavior, pregnancy, substance abuse and delinquency (Juel, 1996; Beuhring, 2000; Pfannenstiel, 1989; Currie and Duncan, 1995; Barnett, 1996). Early learning success lays the foundation for a child's learning future. Children who come to believe they are good at reading, writing, mathematical thinking and learning in general, tend to be more successful throughout their entire school career (Tuscano, 1999; Torgeson, 1998; Vellutino, Scanlon, and Tanzman, 1998; Stevenson and Newman, 1986; Drazen and Haust, 1996; Alexander and Entwisle, 1988; Snow, Burns and Griffin, 1998).

The cost of allowing early learning failure has also received significant attention in recent years. Rates of special education referral and identification continue to increase. Children with learning disabilities make up approximately 50% of all special education identified students. Costs related to special education continue to increase, and in some cases have a negative impact a school district's ability to deliver quality educational services for all students.

While some schools or school districts have continued to observe high rates of reading failure and increasing rates of special education identification, others have looked at program or system changes to reduce early learning failure. Initiatives involving class size for early elementary programs and the use of soundfield enhancement systems have been tried with considerable success (Nye, Hedges, and Konstantopoulus, 2000; Stasz and Stecher, 2000). (Flexer, 2000). Quality preschool experiences, motor development programs and parent training programs have also demonstrated success (Schweinhart, 2001; Barnett, 1996; Campbell and Ramey, 1999). (Johnson, 2001; Jensen, 1998.) (Drazen and Haust, 1996; Pfannenstiel, 1989; Winter, 2001.) Other specific program designs include *Reading Recovery*, *Success for All* and *Instructional Support Teams* (ISTs). Programs like these are leading the way to a new awareness by helping children establish patterns of success in the early year (Slavin, 1996; Pinnell, DeFord and Lyons, 1988). (Slavin, 2001.) (Hartman and Fay, 1996; Kovaleski, Tucker, and Stevens, 1996.)

The prevention concept suggests that offering interventions as soon as delays are noticed in the early years of school will offer better results for children while saving school districts the greater costs associated with special education placement for children without significant intrinsic learning handicaps. Sadly, this notion is at variance with our systems approach which requires that students experience failure over a number of years before a significant discrepancy between potential and achievement can be noted, which then allows a child to be certified as learning disabled.

Months and years of frustration are of little benefit to any young learner. Studies have documented that poor performance in the early years almost invariably continues (Torgesen, 1998; Stevenson and Newman, 1986; Snow, Burns and Griffin, 1998).

The system of special education identification that we use today, especially the identification of learning disabled students, is no longer adequate (Aaron, 1997; Hessler, 2001; Fletcher et al, 1998). Many of the students who are eventually

diagnosed are not intrinsically learning disabled at all, but rather, curriculum casualties who never received appropriate instruction in the first place. Students who are truly learning disabled would also benefit from quicker and more accurate diagnosis so that specific programming at home and at school can begin at a younger age.

Let's consider an example. Several years ago, I received a school file on a new student we will call Danny. Danny was moving into our district in the second semester of his 2nd grade year. Earlier in the year, he had been evaluated for eligibility as a learning disabled student. The records showed that Danny did not qualify as a learning disabled student because the discrepancy between his potential and his performance was not yet great enough to meet the standard. The psychologist's report (paraphrased) in the file went on to explain:

> "Danny is frustrated in school, he does not do well in reading or math, he is beginning to demonstrate significant behavior problems, and he says that he hates to come to school. Danny is not yet eligible for special education," said the report, "but if he continues in the established pattern of poor behavior and poor academic performance, he will probably be eligible by the time he is in 4th grade."

This report by a well-meaning educator states the obvious fact that many choose to ignore. We wait for significant failure **before** giving students significant remedial services.

Change is always hard, but many districts are beginning to look for ways around the system that supports letting Danny wait for help. They are using *Instructional Support Teams* or *Success for All* or *Reading Recovery* or a variety of other approaches to helping children succeed. A network of schools in California calls itself *1,000 Days to Success*, and ensures that students will become successful in basic skills by the end of 2nd grade (Kay and Wheaten, 2001).

But change is hard. Our schools are burdened with a failure model for the identification of students who will receive special services. We overly rely on whole-group instruction in spite of everything we know about the variance of young learners and their differing learning needs. Our fear of standardized assessment instruments causes us to hurry up learning in the early years. We try to deliver far too much content to young learners, rather than teaching them basic skills to a level of mastery and automaticity.

Paradoxically, more state and federal dollars go to school districts with the highest rates of special education identification, which translates to mean the districts with the highest rates of early learning failure. Fortunately, federal IDEA funds can be used to support professional development and programming which supports prevention of early learning failure.

Recently, the President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education described the urgency of moving to a prevention-based model. Their report found:

> "The current system uses an antiquated model that waits for a child to fail, instead of a model based on prevention and intervention. Too little emphasis is put on prevention, early and accurate identification of learning and behavior problems, and aggressive intervention using research-based approaches. This means students with disabilities don't get help early when that help can be most

effective. Special education should be for those who do not respond to strong and appropriate instruction and methods provided in general education."

The 89-page report made only three major recommendations. The second states:

> "The current model guiding special education focuses on waiting for a child to fail, not on early intervention to prevent failure. Reforms must move the system toward early identification and swift intervention, using scientifically based instruction and teaching methods. This will require changes in the nation's elementary and secondary schools as well as reforms in teacher preparation, recruitment and support." (Commission on Excellence in Special Education, 2002).

There was a time when success in school was not essential for success in life. That time has passed. Literacy and numeracy are required skills for nearly all careers. Lifelong learning is required of any human who is trying to keep up with the rapid pace of change, including the changing demands of the workforce. Waiting for two or three or four years for little Danny to fail before support is given is no longer an acceptable model for our schools. It is time to move towards an early success model. It is time to support differentiated instruction for young learners, with a commitment to help every young learner become competent in every basic skill. It is time to create an alliance for early learning success between home and school. The future of our schools and our society demands that we move quickly to prevent early learning failure.

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# A Path to Early Learning Success

A Healthy Beginning

Secure Attachment to Parents/ Guardians

Early Sensory Development

Developing Auditory Skills

Developing Spoken Language Skills

Emotional Control Systems

Developing Behavior Skills

Gross Motor Skills

Developing Social Skills

Visual Motor Skills

Pre-Reading Interest and Skills

Joyful Early Learning Experiences

High Success Rate in Early Learning Experiences

A Caring Classroom

Phonemic Skills

Careful Assessment of Progress Toward Literacy

Careful Assessment of Progress Toward Numeracy

A Classroom Emphasis on Kinesthetic Learning

Concrete Before Symbolic Learning

Strong Positive Relationships with Adults

Developing Awareness of Competence

Enough Time to Practice and Learn New Skills Well

Strong Positive Relationships with Peers

Classroom Strategies for Learning Which Fit the Needs of All Learners

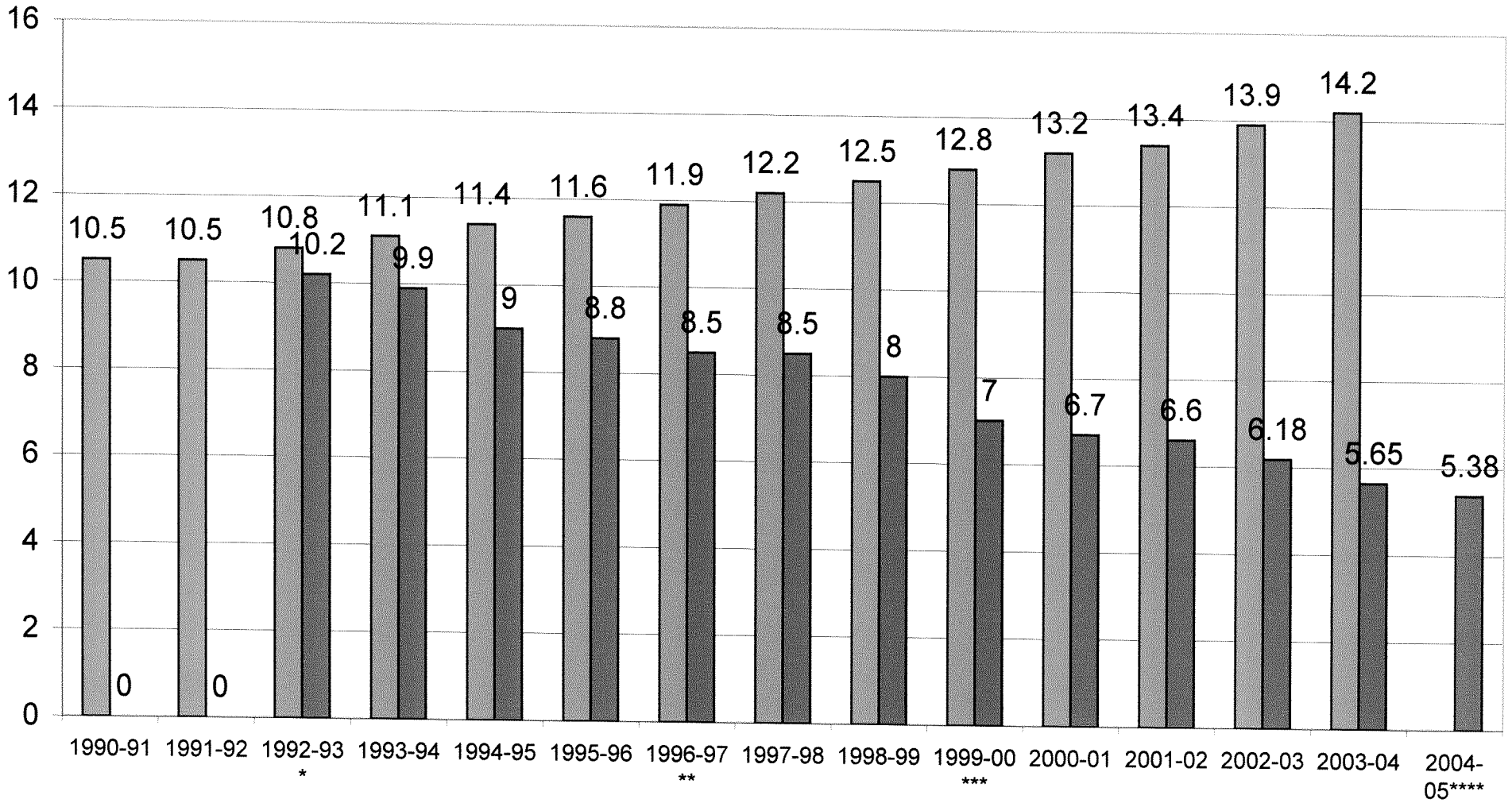
Ongoing Assessment of His/Her Learning Needs

Success Built on Solid Emotional, Physical, and Academic Skills

**What we'd like for every child!**

*Bob Sornson*
*EarlyLearningFoundation.com*

# Comparison of Michigan Total Special Education Identification Rates to Northville Public School Rates, 1990-01 to 2003-04.




* Early Intervention training begins.

** IST Pilot at Silver Springs Elementary begins.

*** Full elementary implementation of IST process begins.

**** As of 02-07-05, Michigan data not available.

Michigan Northville

Bob Sornson, Northville Public Schools

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